

## Lilac Girls (Kelly)

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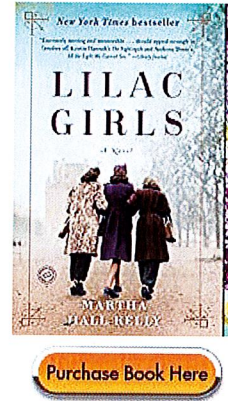
### Lilac Girls

Martha Hall Kelly, 2016

Random House

496 pp.

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### Summary

*For readers of The Nightingale and Sarah's Key, inspired by the life of a real World War II heroine, this powerful debut novel reveals an incredible story of love, redemption, and terrible secrets that were hidden for decades.*

New York socialite Caroline Ferriday has her hands full with her post at the French consulate and a new love on the horizon.

But Caroline's world is forever changed when Hitler's army invades Poland in September 1939—and then sets its sights on France.

An ocean away from Caroline, Kasia Kuzmerick, a Polish teenager, senses her carefree youth disappearing as she is drawn deeper into her role as courier for the underground resistance movement. In a tense atmosphere of watchful eyes and suspecting neighbors, one false move can have dire consequences.

For the ambitious young German doctor, Herta Oberheuser, an ad for a government medical position seems her ticket out of a desolate life. Once hired, though, she finds herself trapped in a male-dominated realm of Nazi secrets and power.

The lives of these three women are set on a collision course when the unthinkable happens and Kasia is sent to Ravensbrück, the notorious Nazi concentration camp for women. Their stories cross continents—from New York to Paris, Germany, and Poland—as Caroline and Kasia strive to bring justice to those whom history has forgotten.

In *Lilac Girls*, Martha Hall Kelly has crafted a remarkable novel of unsung women and their quest for love, freedom, and second chances. It is a story that will keep readers bonded with the characters, searching for the truth, until the final pages. *(From the publisher.)*

Visit the author's website for background on *LiLac Girls*. (<http://www.marthahallkelly.com/>)

#### Author Bio

Martha Hall Kelly is a native New Englander who splits her time between Atlanta, Georgia; New York City; and Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts. She spent a number of years in the advertising world as a copy writer before turning to writing historical fiction. *Lilac Girls*, her bestselling debut was published in 2016, which was followed in 2019 with that novel's prequel, *Lost Roses*.

She has three (mostly grown) children. (*Adapted from Atlanta History Center.*)

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#### Book Reviews

Kelly's compelling first novel follows three women through the course of World War II and beyond.... Despite some horrific scenes, this is a page-turner demonstrating the tests and triumphs civilians faced during war, complemented by Kelly's vivid depiction of history and excellent characters.

***Publishers Weekly***

Kelly's three narrators are based on actual people whose destinies converged in or around Ravensbruck, Hitler's concentration camp for women.... Kelly vividly re-creates the world of Ravensbruck but is less successful integrating the wartime experience of Caroline, whose involvement with the surviving Rabbits comes very late.

***Kirkus Reviews***

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#### Discussion Questions

*We'll add specific questions if and when they're made available by the publisher. In the meantime, use our talking points to help start a discussion for Lilac Girls...then take off on your own:*

1. What role did—could—compassion play in the horrific conditions of Nazified Europe? What were the dangers to those who attempted to act compassionately? How might you have chosen if faced with such a dire dilemma: compassion vs. risk?
2. Talk about the different backgrounds of Caroline, Kasia, and Herta, and how their lives are shaped by their upbringing.
3. Both Caroline and Kasia make foolish mistakes. Does that affect your ability to elicit sympathy for the two characters?
4. "Man's inhumanity to man" is one of the main concerns of *Lilac Girls*. Talk about the "slippery slope" on which Herta finds herself. How did she end up in the untenable situation in which she finds herself? How culpable is she?
5. Were parts of this book too difficult to read? Is there a need to continue writing

about these experiments?

*(Questions by LitLovers. Please feel free to use them, online or off, with attribution. Thanks.)*

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